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I. — *Reasons for Plato's Hostility to the Poets.*

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ONE of the hard things for the student of Plato to understand is the philosopher's attitude toward poetry and the poets. Throughout the dialogues we find him speaking slightly, even contemptuously, both of the art and of its devotees, although he was himself a poet in the truest sense of the word, and had acquired a wonderfully wide and thorough acquaintance with the works of poets of his own age and of the earlier centuries. He was himself a dramatist, and yet he banishes both tragedy and comedy from his Republic. He was an enthusiastic admirer and student of Homer, proving by many eulogistic utterances his high regard for the poet, and by scores of quotations and references his almost perfect familiarity with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; yet Homer was included in the same decree of banishment, and in fact was *the* poet whom Plato most stoutly attacked. Does not Plato put himself to shame and condemn himself when he condemns by word those who in deed are his fellow-workers and his models?

Plato's critics in ancient and modern times have not failed to reproach him as one whose practice does not accord with his preaching; while even his friends, seeking rather to

excuse than to defend him, have generally assumed without question that his charges against Homer and the poets are unreasonable and unfair. It is necessary, therefore, to examine carefully these charges¹ and the argument which is built upon them.

A. REVIEW OF PLATO'S CONDEMNATORY UTTERANCES.

1. **In the Republic.** — After drawing the fundamental lines of his state and determining upon the necessity of a warrior class, the "guardians," Plato proceeds to consider (376 ff.) how these guardians are to be educated. It is agreed that a better system cannot well be devised than the usual one, which prescribes *μουσική* and *γυμναστική* as the two important elements of education. Beginning with the former, he notes that children in their early years are first taught by stories which are for the most part untrue. These stories should be only such as will profit the hearer. We must, therefore, exercise a strict supervision over the *μυθοποιοί*, accepting such stories as are good and rejecting the bad. For bad stories *are* told by Homer, Hesiod, and the other poets, stories which misrepresent the characters and doings of gods and heroes. Even if Hesiod's story about Uranus and Cronus were true, it should not be told to the young, lest they should incline to justify themselves in similar acts of wickedness. Our *φύλακες* are to regard quarrelling among themselves as the basest of all things. How, then, can we allow them to hear in their youth the stories which Homer tells of quarrels and battles among the gods? In general, the following principles may be laid down to govern the poets in the framing of their stories: (a) The deity is always to be represented as he truly is, the author of good alone, not of evil. But Homer has described Zeus as one who sends more misfortune than blessing upon men, and has charged Zeus, Athena, and Themis with instigating acts of injustice.

¹ Plato's casual, generally disparaging, allusions to the poets have been discussed by the writer in a previous paper, epitomized in the A.P.A. PROCEEDINGS, Vol. XXVII., pp. xxxviii ff.; at present only those more important passages require consideration which are distinctly condemnatory or argumentative.

Aeschylus also is guilty of similar misrepresentation. In the ideal state, however, such tales must not be permitted, nor should the citizens be allowed to repeat or hear them. (b) The deity is eternally unchanged in form; he cannot change for the better, will not change for the worse. Nor does he ever deceive men. Whatever Homer and the tragedians have said which is inconsistent with these truths we cannot accept or approve. (c) Death is not a state to be feared, nor is the lower world a world of unhappiness and horror. We must, therefore, strike out all those passages in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which describe the terrors of the realm of Hades. Otherwise our guardians will be demoralized by the fear of death and will make poor soldiers. (d) The reasonable man will bear with equanimity the loss of friends or other misfortunes. We cannot believe Homer, therefore, when he represents heroes and even gods as indulging in unrestrained lamentations. For we cannot have our guardians yielding to such impulses or guilty of any extravagant display of emotion. Even the inextinguishable laughter of the gods upon Olympus is unseemly. (e) Our youth must be taught *σωφροσύνη*, that is, in general, obedience to authority and control over sensual desires. So we cannot approve the insulting words of Achilles to Agamemnon or those passages in Homer which portray the delights of love and of eating and drinking. (f) The vices of bribery and avarice must be unknown to our youth, and the poets must not be permitted to ascribe them to heroes and gods. (g) The heroes must not be said to have been guilty of acts of impiety and cruelty. As kinsmen of the gods they must be models for our young men. But the deeds of Achilles, Theseus, and Pirithous, as related by the poets, tend rather to encourage wickedness. To conclude, therefore, *παυστέον τοὺς τοιούτους μύθους μὴ ἡμῖν πολλὰν εὐχέρειαν ἐντίκτωσι τοῖς νέοις πονηρίας* (391 E.).

Enough with regard to what the poets must or must not say about gods and heroes. We turn now to their stories about men. Can we permit them to say that the unjust are happy and the just unhappy, that injustice is profitable to

the doer and justice unprofitable? This question, however, touches the main subject of our argument. We can answer it only when we have discovered what justice is, and how it profits him who possesses it. We pass on, then, to consider *how* the poets must write, having already determined *what* they are to say. We distinguish three methods in composition, the narrative, the mimetic, and a third which is a combination of the first two. Shall we permit our poets to employ the mimetic method and, if so, in how far? I suspect, says Adimantus, that the question means whether we are to admit tragedy and comedy into our state. Perhaps, Socrates replies, we shall be carried still further; but whithersoever the argument leads, we must follow. We have already laid down the principle that one man cannot do many things. If we hold to this, we must say that our guardians shall not be imitators. It is their business to maintain the freedom of the state, and they cannot be allowed to do anything else. If they are to practise the mimetic art at all, let them personate only worthy characters—the brave, the temperate, the pious. For those qualities which the actor portrays are apt to become a part of his real nature. Therefore, let not our guardians play unworthy rôles. The good man, then, will adopt a style which is in part narrative, in part mimetic; but there will be very little of the latter element. On the other hand, a man of the opposite type will feel free to imitate anything, noble or base. When such a one comes to our state, we shall treat him with all honor but send him away to another city, after anointing him with myrrh and crowning him with a garland of wool (398 A.).

The discussion now passes to the subject of harmonies and rhythms, and we find no further criticisms of the poets until the tenth book is reached. The main thesis of the *Republic* has now been established, and Socrates, looking back over the results of his work, remarks (595 A.) that no provision in the constitution of the state pleases him better than that regarding poetry. I refer, he says, to the exclusion of mimetic poetry. That we were right in banishing it becomes more clear now that we have distinguished the

various parts of the soul. For mimetic poetry is ruinous to the understanding of the hearer unless he be a philosopher. This statement is supported by the following arguments: (a) Those things which are apprehended by the senses have no real existence of themselves, but are only imitations of an ideal prototype. For example, there is one ideal bed, ἡ ἐν τῇ φύσει οὐσα, whose maker is God. The carpenter constructs in numerous copies, not τὸ εἶδος, ἀλλὰ κλίνην τινά. He does not make that which really exists, but only something which is *like* the existent. The third bed is the work of the painter. He, however, is in no sense of the word a maker, rather an imitator of what the others make. He is, therefore, in the third degree removed from the king and the truth. So also is his fellow imitator, the tragic poet. Note further that the painter imitates, not the ideal bed, but the visible copy made by the carpenter; not reality, therefore, but only appearance. The mimetic artist, therefore, has little to do with truth, and can imitate everything simply because he touches everything so superficially. He may, indeed, persuade simple people to believe that he really understands all the things with which he deals. Thus many people believe that Homer and the tragedians have real knowledge of all things human. Can such a judgment possibly be correct? If so, we are driven to the absurdity of supposing that one who might create, not only the imitation, but also the thing imitated, would be content to produce only the former. Let us examine the leader of these poets to whom so much knowledge is ascribed. "Dear Homer," we should say, "if you are not the third remove from truth but only the second, not an imitator but one who knows, then tell us what state was ever governed better through you." No one could name a single state, nor mention a war which was successfully carried on by Homer, nor any invention or public service of any kind that can be ascribed to him. And if he had been a wise teacher, able to make men better, he would have had friends and admirers, and he would never have been neglected and allowed to go around rhapsodizing. We must conclude, then, that Homer and the rest of his kind

are imitators who do not attain to truth. (*b*) Let us consider in another way that the imitator has no knowledge of reality, but only of appearance. The painter imitates, for example, the work of the flute-maker. But the latter will have no real knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) with regard to the goodness or badness of flutes. That knowledge belongs only to the user of the instrument. The maker will have merely right opinion (*δόξα ὀρθή*). The imitator will have neither. So he has been shown once more to be in the third degree removed from true knowledge. (*c*) On what part or faculty of man does the mimetic art work its effect? To illustrate: there is a faculty which is apt to be led astray by the impressions of sense, and another faculty which trusts to calculation and is not deceived. Now imitation represents the actions of a man who is not in harmony with himself, but in a state of internal contention and discord. For there is in the good man a higher principle which inclines to follow reason, and will bid him bear misfortune with equanimity; on the other hand, there is a lower principle which leads him to recollect misfortune and to lament over it. And it is the latter of the two, in the nature of things, which offers the better opportunity for the mimetic artist. Therefore we must not admit him into our state, because, shaping his stories to the tastes of those who throng the theatres, he nourishes and strengthens an inferior part of the soul and destroys the rational element. (*d*) The weightiest charge against the poets is still to come, the charge that poetry has the power to harm even the good. For the best of us, when we are told of the misfortunes of some hero and hear his lamentations, give ourselves up to emotion and sympathy; that is, we praise in another that indulgence of the feelings which we should condemn in ourselves, and we foolishly feel that we can give free rein to our emotions with propriety because the sorrow is another's, not considering that harm must needs accrue thereby to our own characters. Comedy is just as harmful in its results. At the theatre we laugh at base jests and actions which we should not permit ourselves to be guilty of at home; and we weaken our moral nature by the

mere toleration of such vice. In general, poetry feeds the passionate and emotional part of our nature, and that which should rather be ruled by reason is made thereby the ruler of our lives.

Therefore, Glauco, Socrates continues, when we meet Homer's admirers, who say that he has educated Hellas and that we should take him as our teacher in everything and order our lives according to his words, we must respect their good intentions and grant "Ὅμηρον ποιητικώτατον εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν, but we must still maintain that we can admit only hymns to the gods and encomia upon good men into our state. If the poets accuse us of harshness or discourtesy toward them, let us say in our defence that there is an "ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy." Let us further assure them that we are conscious of the charm of ἡ πρὸς ἡδονὴν ποιητική, and would gladly admit her if she could prove her right to exist in a well-ordered state. We will allow her friends to speak on her behalf and undertake to show that she is not only pleasant but useful, to states and to human life; and we shall rejoice if they succeed in their defence. But if the all-important point—her usefulness in the state—cannot be proven, we must shut our ears to her enchantments and firmly, though regretfully, cling to our decision, realizing the high importance of the question at issue.

Such, in outline, is Plato's argument against the poets in the *Republic*. It is divided into two unequal, unlike, and widely separated parts, the one contained in Books II. and III., the other in Book X. In II. and III. the philosopher determines upon (1) the expurgation of Homer, Hesiod, and the tragedians, (2) the limits to be imposed upon the practice of imitation by the guardians, (3) the banishment of the unprincipled imitator, be he epic poet or dramatist; in X. he decrees the exclusion of all poetry except certain forms of lyric verse. In II. and III. the discussion turns upon the two questions (1) how far the works of the poets may be used as educational material for the guardians and (2) what forms of composition the guardians may be permitted to prac-

tise ; in X. the limits of the discussion are greatly widened, and one approaches the general question whether the reading of poetry and the hearing of drama are profitable or harmful. In II. and III. it is only epic and the drama that are attacked ; in X. the philosopher's condemnation reaches all forms of poetry alike.¹ The arguments of X., however, are addressed preëminently to the philosopher, to him who has followed the reasoning and accepted the conclusions of the books which have preceded ; the arguments of II. and III. may be appreciated by the layman as well. In X. there is an unmistakable trace of sophistry, a use of arguments which cannot have appealed to the better judgment of the writer ; the reasoning in II. and III. is direct, serious, and convincing. Plato notes harmful tendencies in the works of the poets which no honest reader can fail to see, but which none but a brave critic, in our time or Plato's, would dare to condemn openly. We cannot question any more than Plato the demoralizing influence, upon actors and audience, of the baser sorts of drama which he condemns. In X., on the other hand, we cannot help feeling that Plato, in "following whither the argument leads," forgets to be broad-minded. Did Plato regard his own work in this way ? Did he himself attach greater weight to the arguments of II. and III. than to those of X. ? It seems to me altogether probable. In the first place, his feeling of hostility is everywhere, even in X., directed especially against those who have been found worthy of censure because they transgress the principles of II. and III., i.e. against the epic poets and the dramatists. Secondly, in pronouncing his final judgment against the poets Plato manifestly shrinks from going so far as the reasoning of X. might fairly lead him. He decrees the banishment of all forms of poetry except hymns to the gods and encomia upon good men. The argument of X. would have justified, even required, the exclusion of these also ; they are not, how-

¹ The argument of X. condemns all poetry which is *mimetic*. It is to be noted, however, that the term *μιμησις*, which in III. clearly means *impersonation*, can only be understood in X. as meaning *representation* or *description*. Taken in this, the Aristotelian, sense, *μιμησις* practically includes poetry of all kinds.

ever, open to the criticisms presented in II. and III. It seems, then, that Plato prefers to draw a conclusion which may be supported by the common sense of II. and III. as well as by the philosophy of X. Lastly, we find Plato in the *Laws* still pressing against the poets the charges which he had first stated in II. and III. of the *Republic*; the arguments of X., however, do not reappear and have evidently been altogether forgotten. One may fairly conclude, therefore, that in the latter of the two chapters into which his plea against the poets is divided, Plato is seeking strictly *philosophical* considerations to support the verdict of the earlier chapter, is trying to show that this almost *a priori* conclusion is in harmony with the great principles upon which the *Republic* rests. The argument of X. carries him further than he is willing to go, but the artistic end of working out a unity through the interdependence of the various parts of the work is accomplished.

2. **In the *Laws*.** — Plato's aim in the *Laws* is to frame, not the best, but the second-best state, not an ideal, but the best that can be realized. It is to be ruled, not by philosophers and philosophy, but by legislators and religion. Its citizens are not to have wives and children in common, nor is poetry to be practically unknown in the state. The keynote which is struck again and again in those passages of the *Laws* which deal with the poets is restraint, a wise censorship over their writings, not as in the *Republic* the expulsion of the writers. Early in the second book, which is given up to the subject of poetry, music, and dancing, the Athenian protagonist asks whether in a well-ordered state poets shall be allowed to teach the young whatever they will in respect to matter, harmony, and rhythm. A negative answer is of course expected and received, though at the same time it is noted that almost no state does, in fact, impose any restrictions at all upon poetry. A little later (660 A.) Plato declares that the true legislator must persuade or compel the poets to employ only those rhythms and harmonies which belong to temperate and brave and good men, and he approves the institutions of Lacedaemon and Crete, which compel the

poets to say that the good man is under all circumstances happy and blessed. In Book VII. he refuses to permit the choruses at public festivals to utter ill-omened and mournful strains before the altars of the gods. Sacrifices should rather be accompanied by prayers, and the poets who compose them must take care not to pray for evil instead of good. In general (801 C.D.), the poet must compose nothing contrary to the city's conception of what is lawful, just, good, and beautiful; he must not exhibit his poems to any private citizen until they have been approved by duly appointed judges and the guardians of the laws. As to the poets of the past, who have left much that is good, a commission, made up of men not less than fifty years old, is to be appointed to examine their works (802 A.B.C.). This commission, after taking counsel with contemporary poets, shall decide what may be accepted, either *in toto* or with emendations, and what must be rejected. Special laws are framed with regard to drama. Comedy is adjudged to serve a useful purpose, — *ἀνευ γὰρ γελοίων . . . τὰ σπουδαῖα μαθεῖν . . . οὐ δυνατόν* (816 D.E.), — and is therefore sanctioned; but performances of comedy must be given over to slaves and hired strangers. Further, comic poets are expressly forbidden to attack any citizen, either in jest or in earnest. The possibility of admitting tragedy is discussed in a passage (817 B.) which, both in its sentiment and its irony, strikingly resembles 398 A. of the *Republic* (cf. *supra*, p. 8). When tragedians come to our state and ask permission to present their poems, we shall say to them, *ἐσμὲν τραγωδίας αὐτοὶ ποιηταὶ κατὰ δύναμιν ὅτι καλλίστης ἅμα καὶ ἀρίστης. πᾶσα οὖν ἡμῖν πολιτεία ξυνέστηκε μίμησις τοῦ καλλίστου καὶ ἀρίστου βίου, ὃ δὲ φάμεν ἡμεῖς γε ὄντως εἶναι τραγωδίαν τὴν ἀληθεστάτην*. They must, therefore, first submit their work to the magistrates. If it be judged as good as ours or better, we will allow them to present it; otherwise we cannot. This passage shows clearly that Plato still holds the same opinions about tragedy which he has expressed in Book III. of the *Republic*. He is still willing to admit an ideal, purified, but impossible, tragedy; he is still just as hostile to that of his own day. Finally, in

accordance with the spirit of all the foregoing is the provision (829 C.D.) that the praises of those who have distinguished themselves for valor shall be sung, not by *any* poet, but rather by one who is himself a doer of noble deeds, though perhaps inferior as respects poetry.

Poetry occupies a comparatively unimportant place in the scheme of education which Plato frames in the *Laws*. Education is, indeed, said to be the gift of Apollo and the Muses (654 A.). It begins with the practice of rhythmical and harmonious movements, and we are wont, accordingly, to call him educated who has been sufficiently trained in the chorus. Further, Plato still adheres (795 D.) to the definition propounded in the *Republic* which distinguishes *μουσική* and *γυμναστική* as the two elements of education. In the elaboration of his definition, however, he gives disproportionate prominence to music (in our sense of the word), dancing, and the proper employment of harmonies and rhythms, as component parts of *μουσική*. The little which he has to say in this connection on the use of the poets as educational material is to the point and decisive. He notes (810 E. ff.) that most people believe that the young should be saturated with poetry, that they should continually hear readings from the poets, and commit to memory selected passages or even entire poems (cf. *Rep.* 606 E.). But, he urges, every poet has, indeed, said many things well, but many things the reverse of well. Since this is so, there is danger for our young in the use of poetry. What, then, is the way of escape? Not, as in II. and III. of the *Republic*, to expurgate the poets, but to choose entirely different material to take the place of poetry. This shall be the present discourse (i.e. the *Laws*), or any similar work, either in prose or verse.¹ While, therefore, epic is not expressly excluded from the state, it is deprived of its time-honored place in the educational system of every Greek city. On the other hand, continual reference is made, not to the study, but to the rendition, in song and dance, of choral lyric poetry — just the sort

¹ On the significance of this arrangement, cf. *infra*, p. 37.

which finds most favor in the *Republic*. Plato frequently refers in the *Laws* to the degeneracy of modern lyric and dramatic poets, especially in the handling of melodies, rhythms, and metres, in the introduction of novelties *περί τε τὰς ὀρχήσεις καὶ περὶ τὴν ἄλλην μουσικὴν ξύμπασαν* (660 B.) for the sake of giving pleasure. In general, they cater to the judgment of the multitude, while our theatres are surrendered to the rule of a mob who express noisily their approval or disapproval and try to overawe the appointed judges. The result of all this has been the ruin of our poets (659 A.B., 700, 701; cf. *Rep.* 493 D.).

It will be seen from the foregoing that the arguments of *Republic* X., to which it seems that Plato himself attached comparatively little weight (cf. *supra*, p. 12), are not employed at all in the *Laws*. Yet he still adheres stoutly to the same views which find such forcible expression in *Republic* II. and III., regarding the demoralizing effect of poetic fictions and misrepresentations. He does not banish the poets, because he is not now constructing an ideal state, but he is just as truly an enemy of poetry, and he is still influenced by the arguments which appealed to him, as they must appeal to us, most strongly in the earlier dialogue. Several passages in the *Laws* which recall and reinforce the teachings of *Republic* II. and III. have already been noted; others may be briefly mentioned. In 886 C. he comments on the evil influence of the stories about the origin of the gods and the way in which they behaved toward one another; similarly in 377 E. of the *Republic* he condemns Hesiod for his story of Uranus and Cronus, noting in this, as in the later dialogue, that such tales are not calculated to promote filial piety. In general, it is disgraceful for Homer, Tyrtæus, and other poets to lay down wrong principles of life (*Leg.* 858 E.); just this is the great contention of *Republic* 378-393. In 941 B. of the *Laws* Plato urges that no son of Zeus was ever guilty of treachery or violence, and that men who are guilty of such deeds must not justify themselves by their supposed example; just as in *Republic* 388 A., 391 C.-E. he has refused with the same practical precaution to believe the

fictions which ascribe unseemly deeds to kinsmen of the gods. In the state for which Plato is framing the *Laws* the poets must be compelled to say that the good man is happy under all circumstances, the bad man wretched in spite of his apparent blessings (660 A.) ; for the fact that the latter is glorified and represented as happy by the poets leads to much ill. With these conclusions we may compare Glauco's plea for injustice in *Republic* II. (358-362), and still more closely the later words of Adimantus (364-367). Furthermore, we find Socrates in III. (392 B.) laying down precisely the rule stated in 660 A. of the *Laws*. That most demoralizing of all beliefs, which leads men to practise injustice with the hope of appeasing the gods by atoning sacrifices, is referred to in three separate passages of the *Laws* (716 E., 885 D., 906-7). It is the poets, says Plato, who have inculcated this belief, but nothing can be more untrue than that the gods receive with favor the sacrifices of the wicked. Precisely this is the charge which Adimantus brings against the poets in the *Republic* (364 D.-365 A., 365 E.-366 B.). The best service which can employ the poets, according to the *Laws* (801 A., 829 C.), as well as the *Republic* (607 A., 486 D.), is the composition of hymns to the gods and encomia upon good men.

3. **In Other Dialogues.** — We find in many of Plato's shorter dialogues an inclination to speak slightly of the poets ; hardly any passages, however, can be cited which show such real hostility as is evident in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*. Yet we cannot argue from this fact that Plato's feeling against the poets was of comparatively late growth. For it is only in the two great works mentioned that the philosopher appears as legislator ; and the subject of poetry does not naturally lie within the scope of those other dialogues which are dogmatic in their character. We find, however, in one of the earliest of the *διαλογοι ζητητικοί* a most significant allusion to the poets. Euthyphro, defending himself against the charge of filial impiety, justifies his treatment of his father by recalling the way in which Zeus treated *his* father, Cronus (*Euthyphr.* 5 E., 6 A.). We could almost think, forgetting the order of time, that Plato is here bringing forward a con-

crete example to prove the truth of the principle stated in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Certainly he writes, here as in the *Republic*, with a realizing sense of the harmfulness of such tales, and of the poems which contain them. And Socrates tries to persuade Euthyphro (6 B.C.), no less than Glauco and Adimantus (*Rep.* 378 D.), of the incredibility of these fictions, — the wars and enmities and battles of the gods. So he opposes the idea that holiness is a sort of traffic between the gods and men (14 E.) in much the same spirit which moves Adimantus to complain of the poets (*Rep.* 364 D.–366 B.) for saying that the gods are influenced by the sacrifices of wicked men. In the *Phaedrus* (278 C.), Homer is put upon his defence in a way that, at least, recalls the tenth book of the *Republic*. That is, he is asked to prove that his writings are based upon a knowledge of the truth, — not, indeed, for the sake of maintaining his citizenship, but to prove his right to a higher title than that of poet; but the great thesis of *Republic* X., that the poet has no knowledge of the truth, is here taken for granted. Finally, one more disparaging reference to the poets as imitators is contained in the *Timæus* (19 D.). Socrates notes their limitations, οὐ τι τὸ ποιητικὸν ἀτιμάζων γένος, but observing that mimetic artists imitate best those things οἷς ἂν ἐντραφῇ.

B. THE STUDY OF THE POETS IN THE GREEK SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

It is noteworthy that Plato everywhere lays special stress upon the demoralizing influence of the poets as *educators*. He conceives them as addressing an audience which is by no means insensible of their artistic skill, but, nevertheless, regards especially the matter of their poems, receiving it as true and morally profitable. Herein Plato is not giving us a false impression of the notions current in his time. Almost every Hellene would have been numbered among those “eulogists of Homer” who say that “he has educated Hellas” (*Rep.* 606 E.), and it is difficult to exaggerate the strength of the national feeling on this subject. It may be truly said that the study of the poets lay at the basis of the whole

Greek system of education. The Greeks sought, above all, to secure the harmonious development of soul and body. Παιδεία, therefore, consisted of μουσική and γυμναστική. The term μουσική, employed in the broad sense, comprehended first, γράμματα or γραμματική, the study of reading, writing, and literature, and second, μουσική in the narrower sense, music with its companion art of dancing.¹ In these branches was comprehended the liberal education of the best period of Athenian history. When such studies as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, geography, and drawing were taken up, they continued for a long time to be pursuits of the few, and the educational ideal of the nation remained unchanged. Before we pronounce such a conception of education as belonged to the Greeks and such a curriculum narrow, we must consider a point of the utmost importance for the present discussion, namely, how fundamentally unlike our own was the object which they had in view. This is nowhere better stated than by Plato in the few words ἡ δ' ἐπὶ ψυχῇ μουσική (*Rep.* 376 E.). That is, education had to do rather with the moral and spiritual part of man, than with the intellectual. Its aim was primarily ethical training and development, not mental acquisition.² A consideration for the aesthetic side of education, though of later growth and always regarded as of secondary importance, went hand in hand with the predominating ethical purpose. It is fairly said, therefore, that "*Die gewöhnliche griechische Erziehung war kein Unterricht in Vielwissen, vielmehr eine Bildung des Sinnes und der Gesinnung*" (Grasberger, Vol. II., p. 60). This is preëminently true down to the close of the Peloponnesian war, when the so-called "practical" branches mentioned above began to claim their place in the system of instruction, though they never displaced the older subjects of study. The great function of education continued to be to make good rather than wise citizens.

¹ Hermann-Blümner, *Lehrbuch der griechischen Privatalterthümer*, p. 317; Grasberger, *Erziehung und Unterricht im klassischen Alterthum*, Vol. II., pp. 255, 350.

² Grasberger, Vol. II., p. 15; Müller, *Die griechische Privatalterthümer*, pp. 166, 167, 171.

This ethical tendency is illustrated with especial clearness by the way in which the Greeks regarded the study of music. The aim of such study was by no means to acquire technical skill, — in fact, the over-skilful performer was regarded rather with contempt than approval,¹ — nor was music considered primarily as a means of entertainment for performer or audience; it was rather to the Greeks “*ein höchst wichtiges Bildungsmittel des Geistes.*”² The truth of this statement may be clearly seen from the allusions which Plato himself makes to music, rhythms, and harmonies in the *Republic* (398–401, 424 D.) and in the *Laws* (656, 657, 665–671, 700, 800–802, 812). So Plutarch regarded music from the same point of view, as serving first, *πρὸς θεῶν τιμὴν*, and second, *πρὸς τὴν τῶν νέων παιδείαν* (*De Musica*, c. 27). This conception of the purpose of musical training explains why the flute was held in so little esteem at Athens, as an instrument which tended to disturb the equilibrium of the soul, and why Plato banishes it altogether from his ideal state. Music, therefore, the one great branch of the soul’s education, was employed as a means of making the soul better, of developing character; precisely similar was the primary aim which the Greeks had in view in the study of *γράμματα*, the works of the poets. To stimulate the imagination, to arouse to noble deeds by the inspiration of historic and heroic example (*Phaedr.* 245 A.), to keep alive Greek patriotism and hatred for the barbarian (Isocr. *Paneg.* 159), — all these motives had their place; but more important than any of these were regarded the moral lessons, the gnomic wisdom, the religious teachings of the poets.

It will be proper to note here the most important of the many references in Greek literature to the use of the poets, especially Homer, as educational material, in order to show first, how universal and how enduring was the belief in their utility for this purpose, and second, the grounds upon which this belief rested. Those passages from the *Republic* and the *Laws* of Plato which reflect and comment upon this

¹ Aristotle, *Pol.* VIII. 6. p. 1340 b. 20.

² Hermann-Blümner, p. 318, with reference to Arist. *Pol.* VIII. 3. p. 1337 b. 27.

belief have been already noted; many other passages of similar tenor might be cited from other Platonic dialogues, but it may suffice to notice only the precise and instructive description of the conventional system of Greek education which is contained in the *Protagoras* (325 C.–326 E.). The youth, says Protagoras, is instructed at home in his earliest years as to the nature of the just and the unjust, the honorable and the base, the pious and the impious. When he is sent to school and has learned his letters, he is given the works of good poets to read and is compelled to learn them by heart, ἐν οἷς πολλὰ μὲν νοουετήσεις ἔνειςι, πολλὰ δὲ διέξοδοι καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ἐγκώμια παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἵνα ὁ παῖς ζηλῶν μιμῆται καὶ ὀρέγῃται τοιοῦτος γενέσθαι. οἳ τ' αὖ καθαρισταὶ ἕτερα τοιαῦτα σωφροσύνης ἐπιμελοῦνται καὶ ὅπως ἂν οἱ νέοι μηδὲν κακουργώσι. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις, ἐπειδὴν καθαρίζειν μάθωσιν, ἄλλων αὖ ποιητῶν ἀγαθῶν ποιήματα διδάσκουσι μελοποιῶν, εἰς τὰ καθαρίσματα ἐντείνοντες, καὶ τοὺς ῥυθμούς τε καὶ τὰς ἀρμονίας ἀναγκάζουσιν οἰκειοῦσθαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν παιδῶν, ἵνα ἡμερώτεροί τε ᾧσι, καὶ εὐρυθμότεροι καὶ εὐαρμοστότεροι γιγνόμενοι χρήσιμοι ᾧσιν εἰς τὸ λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν. πᾶς γὰρ ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εὐρυθμίας τε καὶ εὐαρμοστίας δέεται. All this shows, as Protagoras urges, that the Athenians believed that virtue might be taught; it also shows that their whole system of education, a most important part of which was περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν εἶναι (*Prot.* 338 E.), was planned to accomplish that end. The transcendent importance of Homeric study is indicated in a well-known passage from the *Symposium* of Xenophon (III. 5, IV. 6). Niceratus is introduced as one who knows by heart both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He is proud of this acquirement, because “Homer has written about almost all human affairs. If any one would fit himself for the duties of householder, orator, or general, let him study Homer.” Niceratus voices herein the general sentiment of all Hellas. Aristophanes, picturing the ancient system of education in the *Clouds*, describes the pupil as learning lyric songs in the school of the *κιθαριστής*. Two dithyrambs by poets of the good old days are mentioned as examples of the material employed.

Further, no pupil was allowed to be guilty of the musical "twists" and variations which were so common in later times and of which Plato frequently complains; simply because, as Plato urges, these tended to destroy the wholesome moral influence of musical training. Quite as interesting for the present purpose as the foregoing passage is a part of the conversation between Aeschylus and Euripides in the *Frogs* (1008 ff.). Aeschylus asks, "For what ought one to admire a poet?" Euripides answers, *δεξιότητος καὶ νοουθεσίας ὅτι βελτίους τε ποιοῦμεν | τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν*. If Euripides has made men worse instead of better, he is adjudged worthy of death by Dionysus. A little later, Aeschylus recounts the various branches of knowledge in which the Greeks have been instructed by their early poets:—

Ὅρφεὺς μὲν γὰρ τελετάς θ' ἡμῖν κατέδειξε φόνων τ' ἀπέχεσθαι (1032)
 Μουσαῖος δ' ἐξακέσεις τε νόσων καὶ χρησμούς· Ἡσίοδος δὲ
 γῆς ἐργασίας, καρπῶν ὥρας, ἀρότους· ὁ δὲ θεῖος Ὅμηρος
 ἀπὸ τοῦ τιμῆν καὶ κλέος ἔσχεν πλὴν τοῦδ' ὅτι χρήστ' ἐδίδαξε
 τάξεις, ἀρετάς, ὀπλίσεις ἀνδρῶν;

It is Homer's heroes, therefore, who are proper models for imitation, not the Phaedras and Stheneboeas of Euripides. But the latter rejoins, "Was my story about Phaedra untrue?" Aeschylus replies in the memorable words:—

μὰ Δι' ἀλλ' ὄντ'· ἀλλ' ἀποκρύπτειν χρὴ τὸ πονηρὸν τόν γε ποιητὴν (1053)
 καὶ μὴ παράγειν μηδὲ διδάσκειν. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν
 ἔστι διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖς ἡβῶσιν δὲ ποιηταί.
 πάνυ δὲ δεῖ χρυστὰ λέγειν ἡμᾶς.

These lines might have served Plato as a text for his discussion in the *Republic*.

At least three passages from Isocrates may be properly quoted in the present connection. In the *Panathenaic* oration (25, 26. p. 238 b.) he explains ἦν ἔχω γνώμην περὶ τε τῆς παιδείας καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν, denying that he disapproves τῆς παιδείας τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν προγόνων καταλειφθείσης. In the *Panegyric* (159. p. 74 a. b.) he says that Homer won greater fame because he glorified those who fought with barbarians, and on

this account τοὺς προγόνους ἡμῶν βουληθῆναι ἔντιμον αὐτοῦ ποιῆσαι τὴν τέχνην ἔν τε τοῖς τῆς μουσικῆς ἄθλοις καὶ τῇ παιδεύσει τῶν νεωτέρων, ἵνα πολλάκις ἀκούοντες τῶν ἐπῶν ἐκμανθάνωμεν τὴν ἔχθραν τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς καὶ ζηλοῦντες τὰς ἀρετὰς τῶν στρατευσαμένων τῶν αὐτῶν ἔργων ἐκείνοις ἐπιθυμῶμεν. Finally, speaking in the oration *Against Nicocles* of various opportunities for education and improvement, he adds (3. p. 156) πρὸς δὲ τούτοις καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν τινες τῶν προγεγενημένων ὑποθήκας ὡς χρὴ ζῆν καταλελοίπασιν. Aeschines and Lycurgus also refer to the inspiration and instruction which the Greeks gained from their poets. The former quotes in the oration *Against Ctesiphon* (43. 135) a wise saying of Hesiod, prefacing it with the words λέγει γάρ που παιδεύων τὰ πλήθη καὶ συμβουλεύων ταῖς πόλεσι . . . διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ οἶμαι ἡμᾶς παῖδας ὄντας τὰς τῶν ποιητῶν γνώμας ἐκμανθάνειν, ἵνα ἄνδρες ὄντες αὐταῖς χρώμεθα. Lycurgus, in the speech *Against Leocrates* (102-104), uses the following words: οἱ ποιηταὶ μιμούμενοι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν ἔργων ἐκλεξάμενοι, μετὰ λόγου καὶ ἀποδείξεως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους συμπεῖθουσιν . . . τούτων τῶν ἐπῶν ἀκούοντες οἱ πρόγονοι ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἔργων ζηλοῦντες οὕτως ἔσχον πρὸς ἀρετὴν ὥστε κ.τ.λ. Coming down as far as Strabo and Lucian, we find in the latter (*Anacharsis*, 20-22) a full description of the earlier education of Athens. The young are first instructed in music and arithmetic, and then listen to the works of the poets in order that the noble qualities and glorious deeds which they describe may arouse them to emulation. With the same ethical purpose in view they are taken to the theatre to hear tragedy and comedy. Strabo, in the introduction to his work, combats Eratosthenes' view that Homer aimed only to amuse. On the contrary, says the geographer (I. 2, 3 ff.), the ancients regarded poetry as a primitive philosophy which should guide the young from childhood. Therefore τοὺς παῖδας αἱ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πόλεις πρῶτιστα διὰ τῆς ποιητικῆς παιδεύουσιν, οὐ ψυχαγωγίας χάριν δήπουθεν ψιλῆς, ἀλλὰ σωφρονισμοῦ. Homer's conscious purpose is to instruct in geography, strategy, agriculture, rhetoric, eloquence. Therefore all educated persons appeal

to him as to an authority. For he is not always a writer of fiction, but shows his didactic aim in the use of allegories, wise harangues, and so forth, thus inciting his readers to virtue. In the time after Homer history and philosophy came to be subjects of study; but they are, at best, pursuits of the favored few; the great mass cannot be moved by reason. Hence our ancestors held that poetry was all-sufficient for the education of young and old, and to this day poetry is the main agent which instructs our people and crowds our theatres. Athenaeus (I. c. 15, p. 8 E.) regards Homer as one who strove, above all, to impart ethical teaching: "Ὁμηρος ὁρῶν τὴν σωφροσύνην οἰκειοτάτην ἀρετὴν οὖσαν τοῖς νέοις καὶ πρώτῃν . . . βουλόμενος ἐμφύσαι πᾶσιν αὐτὴν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐφεξῆς κ.τ.λ. Allusions of this sort from writers of so late a period abundantly show that "Plato's famous protest . . . does not seem to have materially affected the place of Homer in Greek education" (Jebb, *Homer*, pp. 82, 83).

The fact which has been emphasized in the preceding paragraph, that the primary object in the study of the poets was ethical, becomes clearer when one reviews the names of those poets whose works were especially employed as text-books. After the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the poems of Hesiod, Solon, Phocylides, and Theognis enjoyed the highest popularity (Hermann-Blümner, p. 316; Grasberger, Vol. II., p. 279). It is not Solon or Theognis whose works we prize most, nor would Plato himself have ranked them highest. But it is beyond question that the Greeks habitually judged their poets by a utilitarian standard. They were not blind to their purely poetic excellences. A nation of which this can truly be said does not produce great poets. But the judgments of prose writers, the passages which they quote, the general tone of criticism and comment show that the Greeks regarded the poet as, before all, a teacher, a being of inspired wisdom whose mission was, first, to make men better; and, second, to make them wiser.

C. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE POETS AS EDUCATORS.

Were the works of the Greek poets good educational material for students who were taught to regard them as above all text-books of morality and righteousness? Could they safely be relied upon to form the characters of the young, to furnish them with proper ethical conceptions, to be an unquestioned, implicitly trusted rule of faith and practice? These questions have hardly been propounded seriously, and perhaps it is presumptuous to do so. In the first place, scholars rather praise than criticize a system of education under which Greece accomplished such unequalled results. Yet it would surely be begging the question to assume that the Greeks owed what they achieved to their educational system. This was a natural outgrowth of unusual conditions, not a formal system carefully wrought out and matured by the best thought of generations. It maintained itself with all the strength which once-established paedagogic methods have always shown. It unquestionably bore much good fruit. No one would have been more willing to admit this fact than Plato himself, or better able to appreciate that which the study of the poets did accomplish. His point is rather that it did not accomplish what its supporters claimed for it, that which constituted its *raison d'être*, and that the evil results of the system more than counterbalanced the good. This is the only fair understanding of Plato's position, and this position is far from being untenable. Secondly, the "love and veneration for Homer" (*Rep.* 595 B.) which almost prevented Plato from condemning his poems has entirely prevented later scholars from sympathizing with Plato's criticisms. But passing over the argument that "a man should not be honored above the truth" (*Rep.* 595 C.), it may be fairly said that our "love and veneration" for Plato should be hardly less than for Homer and should prevent our condemning *him* too hastily. Plato understood Homer as well as we and the conditions of his own time better; it is presumption in us to refuse to admit the possibility that Plato was right in his conclusions.

In considering the fitness or unfitness of the Greek poets

to be the educators of Greece, it is only necessary to deal with Homer, Hesiod, and the dramatists, against whom all Plato's arguments are directed. His criticisms of them are based upon the fundamental fact that they represent the gods and heroes as guilty of unseemly and even wicked deeds. This is not a fact of great moment to us; that it was of far greater importance and of far-reaching consequence to the Greek reader of Homer is a point which has been hardly noticed. Those whose treachery, strifes, amours, and weaknesses Homer describes were the gods of the Greeks, and their belief in them was something deep and real. Their religious system was not merely or primarily an artistic creation, but a religion in the truest sense of the word. The gods of Olympus directed the affairs of the world; it was to them that the Greek prayed for assistance and sacrificed thank-offerings. His religion was by no means unaccompanied by an ethical creed; for the gods rewarded the upright and punished the wicked. The evil-doer feared their wrath, while the believer strove to be a doer of good alone. It has been said that the Greeks "*in vieler Beziehung mehr Religiosität gehabt haben als die gegenwärtigen.*"¹ Certainly they lived in closer association with their gods and with more constant regard to divine favor or anger. It was no slight thing, therefore, that Homer and Hesiod and the dramatists misrepresented, as Plato would say, the gods of Greece. That one could find justification in the deeds of the gods for almost any wicked act was not a trifling circumstance nor one attended with no evil results. Homer "*war die Bibel der Griechen; aus ihm lernte das Kind die Götter kennen*" (Grasberger, Vol. II., p. 284). Homer and Hesiod created, as Herodotus says (II. 53), the theogony of the Greeks. The real religion, the religious sense of the nation, they did not and could not create; they rather directed it to the contemplation and worship of deities in many respects worthy, but in many respects unworthy, of worship. Not that these poets degraded instead of reproducing in more definite and artistic

¹ Krause, *Geschichte der Erziehung, des Unterrichts, und der Bildung bei den Griechen, Etruskern, und Römern*, p. 18.

form the conceptions of the deities existing in their own day ; but the why and wherefore was a matter of small importance to the Greeks of historical times. The actual situation which then presented itself was that "the Bible of the Greeks" failed of being all that a Bible should be ; that the deities of that Bible, to whom a nation endowed with a naturally strong religious feeling looked up, possessed characteristics which the better part of the nation could only despise, and to which the worse part appealed as a justification for their own wickedness. Neither good nor bad, except in the rarest instances, thought of disbelieving any stories about the gods. Homer was truly a Bible as regards the implicit faith with which his words were accepted. As the Greeks referred to him as an authority in history, in geography, in the art of war, so his statements regarding things divine were decisive and unquestioned. This fact ensured the demoralizing effect of the worse stories contained in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. For it is characteristic of human nature to seek out and fasten upon the baser elements of works which the belief of generations has invested with a halo of sanctity. Few could possess at the same time the fearlessness and the high conception of the necessary and perfect goodness of the gods which enabled Plato to cut the Gordian knot by declaring that the poets who ascribe unworthy deeds to the gods speak falsely. On the other hand, those who could not rise to so lofty a standard as Plato's or frame a religion of their own, but were yet wiser and better than the common herd, would find the foundations of all belief shaken by that which was revolting to them in the sacred books of the nation. Last of all, the *ignobile vulgus* would have been influenced least by that which was good and most by that which was harmful in Homer and Hesiod. Such must have been the effect of received poetic fictions upon maturer minds ; much worse their influence upon the young, to whom they were taught and by whom they were accepted as worthy of all belief and as furnishing a right standard for conduct. For, as Plato says (*Rep.* 378 D.E.), "the young cannot judge what is allegorical and what is not, but whatever opinions they con-

ceive at that time of life are wont to become indelible and unchangeable." No one, Plato least of all, would incline to deny that the young found much which was ennobling in the works of the poets ; but Plato stands practically alone among ancients and moderns as one who has realized and stated fairly the shortcomings of the poets as moral teachers.

It is true that we can base the foregoing conclusions on little besides *a priori* reasoning. This, however, is by no means strange. If Plato's "love and veneration" for Homer almost prevented him from speaking, those who were less fearless than he and less independent of popular opinion were naturally silent. Earlier philosophers than Plato had, indeed, condemned in no uncertain tones the theology of Homer and Hesiod (cf. *infra*, p. 34) ; but down to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war, during the period when moral standards were highest and religious feeling most sincere, men were saved by their own better instincts from being greatly influenced by the things which Plato condemns in epic and tragedy. Further, local forms of worship still maintained themselves, which contained more of real religion accompanied by less of mythological fiction. So long as this was true, people did not depend entirely upon Homer or Hesiod for their conceptions of deities or for their religious creed. But the unifying power of epic religious tradition was ever active in absorbing local cults, substituting conceptions in many ways broader and nobler, but with the taint of mythological impurity. While, on the one hand, this gradual disappearance of local cults was making epic more and more the sole source and repository of religious lore, we have to note on the other hand the awakening of a more critical spirit in dealing with the works of the poets and the beginning of the attacks made by the sophists upon existing standards of religious belief. The harm wrought by the sophists was due to the fact that they undermined the foundations of the old religion without substituting anything in its place. Under their leadership men approached Homer and Hesiod, no longer with unquestioning faith, but in the same spirit in which the professional atheist studies the Bible, to seek out

what was inconsistent, absurd, or immoral. For it was distinctly a part of the sophists' stock in trade to interpret the works of famous poets, especially those which contained moral teachings, to criticize them from every point of view, and to find in them, perhaps by means of forced or allegorical explanations, support for a given thesis. This higher criticism was a dangerous weapon in their hands, quite as dangerous in the hands of their followers when such study had become an established fashion. Still further, we must notice that the gradual lowering of moral standards which scholars date from the time of the Peloponnesian war made men more eager to discover and to treasure the worst which was contained in the works of the poets. All causes combined, therefore, at this later period to make their epic a possession of more than doubtful value to the Greeks from the moral point of view, and especially dangerous as educational material for the young. The *Iliad* and the *Theogony* were still the same, but the character and the spirit of their readers were different. What had been comparatively harmless for the *Μαραθωνομάχαι*, their sons, and fathers, was full of harmful possibilities for a weaker, less upright generation — the generation to which Plato belonged.

We find the clearest indications of the generally demoralizing influence of poetic fictions in the *Euthyphro* and in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. In the former (5 E.), Euthyphro, about to prosecute his father for murder, defends himself against the charge of filial impiety by recalling the way in which Zeus and Cronus treated their fathers. The poets are clearly held responsible for making such an argument as Euthyphro's possible, for Socrates immediately proceeds to ask him if he really believes the stories of quarrels and battles among the gods which are told ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν (6 B.). Now Plato, in this early dialogue, is not undertaking a polemic against the poets; this entirely casual allusion has, therefore, a different value from the elaborate argument of the advocate which is contained in Books II. and III. of the *Republic*. Further, Plato is too perfect an artist to violate dramatic probability even in small matters. We must find, therefore,

in Euthyphro's defence a reflection of the spirit of the times. This is even more clearly true of the words which Aristophanes puts into the mouth of the *ἄδικος λόγος*. In answer to his opponent, who has declared that justice is *παρὰ τοῖσι θεοῖς*, he asks :—

πῶς δῆτα δίκης οὔσης ὁ Ζεὺς (904)
οὐκ ἀπόλωλεν τὸν πατέρ' αὐτοῦ
δήσας ;

The answer of the *δίκαιος λόγος* is noteworthy :—

αἰβοῖ· τουτὶ καὶ δὴ
χωρεῖ τὸ κακόν·

In lines 1077 ff. the *ἄδικος λόγος* reaches the limit of sacrilegious boldness :—

ἐμοὶ δ' ὀμιλῶν
χρῶ τῇ φύσει, σκίρτα, γέλα, νόμιζε μηδὲν αἰσχρόν.
μοιχὸς γὰρ ἦν τύχης ἁλούς, τάδ' ἀντερεῖς πρὸς αὐτόν,
ὥς οὐδὲν ἡδίκηκας· εἴτ' εἰς τὸν Δί' ἐπανενέγκειν,
κάκεινος ὥς ἦττων ἔρωτός ἐστι καὶ γυναικῶν.

"This appeal to the example of the gods," says Humphreys, in his note upon this passage, "is not comic invention. Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 474 ff., ὕβρις | τὰδ' ἐστὶ κρείσσω δαιμόνων εἶναι θέλειν· | τόλμα δ' ἐρώσα, and Eur. *Tro.* 948 ff., τὴν θεὸν (Aphrodite) κόλαζε καὶ Διὸς κρείσσω γενοῦ | ὃς τῶν μὲν ἄλλων δαιμόνων ἔχει κράτος | κείνης δὲ δοῦλός ἐστι· συγγνώμη δ' ἐμοί. Of course, Euripides does not approve such morals; he portrays an actual state of affairs, being the dramatist of the real." Both Euripides and Aristophanes, in fact, are addressing an audience to whom such arguments were familiar.

Additional testimony to the harmful influence of the poets, which is all the more valuable because it comes from an unwilling witness, is found in an essay of Plutarch's, entitled, *Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκοῦειν*. The writer, consciously antagonizing Plato, is seeking to show how young men may read or hear poetry *without being harmed* thereby; and he frankly admits in the first chapter that poetry *is* dangerous to them. The very *raison d'être* of the essay, therefore, is a

better argument in Plato's justification than its contents can be; still, the latter are interesting as showing how closely Plutarch follows Plato, and how loyally he undertakes to meet the philosopher's criticisms. He illustrates very happily what seems to him the proper principle in dealing with the poets, by saying that Lycurgus was foolish in destroying all the vines of his country because his people were addicted to drunkenness. So we should not cut down, but rather prune wisely, the vine of the Muses. We cannot, however, grant at once that Lycurgus was wrong, and that Plutarch is right; the broad question which the latter's illustration suggests is by no means one-sided, and Plato's choice of sides is the more defensible for one who is framing an ideal state, and not directing a real one. But to follow Plutarch: he urges (16 A.) that one must understand that poetry finds its charm in fiction; that, therefore, one must accept as fiction and not permit to disturb him, such passages as those which describe Poseidon shaking the earth, and the fear of Hades lest his realm should become visible with all its horrors, the perfidy of Apollo in slaying Achilles, or the hapless state of the dead. On the other hand, the poet displays his ignorance when he speaks of Zeus implanting evil among mortals. A further point (17 F.) is that poetry, as an imitative art, is to be judged by the excellence of the imitation, and not by the moral quality of the actions imitated. Thus we may praise a picture representing Orestes killing his mother if it be well painted, even though the subject is shocking. Often the poet clearly intimates that he condemns the wickednesses which he describes, and so directs our judgment (19 A.). Homer excels all the other poets in intimations of this sort, as is shown by various passages. Similarly, the poets frequently make their descriptions of wicked acts profitable by indicating the shame and loss which befall the doers; the displeasure which Zeus visits upon Hera for deceiving him is a case in point. It is to be noted further, that we often find the poets contradicting themselves, a fact which tends to lessen their authority, and so their *power to do harm*. In general, when we discover such contradictions, we must

choose the better of the two versions. Thus when Homer tells us of quarrels among the gods, we must seek to refute him by other passages from his own poems (20 E.). When we cannot in this way cite the poets against themselves, we must convict them of error by appealing to other authorities. Again, the poets often use the names of the gods by way of personifying natural forces. So, when evil deeds are ascribed to Zeus, it is not Zeus that is meant, but fate; thus Plutarch explains the story, which was so distasteful to Plato, of Zeus dispensing ills to mankind (Ω 527 ff.). On the other hand, when good deeds are ascribed to Zeus, it is Zeus that is meant, and not fate! Plutarch notes (25 D.), as does Plato, that variety is essential to an interesting narrative. Therefore, not even the gods can be always represented as free from passions and errors. Therefore, one must dismiss the habit of regarding all the deeds of any hero or god as admirable; otherwise the reading of the poets will be harmful to him. For example, one cannot approve of Achilles' inordinate conduct towards Agamemnon. On the other hand, there are many profitable sayings in the poets, concealed, indeed, from view, as fruit by abundant foliage (28 E.). Such, for instance, is the description of the silent, well-ordered advance of the Greeks before Troy; such, also, is Aeschylus' characterization of Amphiaras. Even from passages which seem wicked, one may often derive some profitable lesson, or, at least, neutralize their harmful effect by recalling the contrary sayings of philosophers. If, however, poet and philosopher agree, so much the better. In general, we can, by proper treatment, reconcile the words of the poets with the doctrines of the philosophers, and so make the study of poetry a useful introduction to philosophy (36 D.-37 B.).

Such in brief is the argument of this interesting essay. That the author is seeking to refute Plato is shown by the frequency with which he quotes passages which Plato condemned.¹ But what has he proved against Plato? Nothing more than Plato himself would have admitted; namely, that

¹ All those which have been referred to specifically are passages which Plato quotes.

a philosopher might read the poets without being harmed. This, in fact, is all that he undertakes to prove, while he grants freely and frequently all that Plato maintained; namely, that the lay reader is likely to be influenced for bad by much that the poets have said. Of course one cannot take Plutarch too seriously, and need not attempt to criticize any of his very remarkable arguments. Suffice it to say that if he had held the same views concerning poetry as Plato, and had tried to justify them by an ironical defence of the poets, he could hardly have done better. It is interesting to observe, by the way, that the old Greek idea that the poets aimed to be moral teachers and are to be regarded as such has descended even to Plutarch.

It is sufficiently evident from the foregoing that the danger to public morals which Plato believed must attend the study of the poets was in his time a very real one, that since the poets, who were regarded as teachers of righteousness, presented to the reader far too many pictures of unseemly conduct, they did not offer healthful educational material for the young. Some, indeed, have been inclined to minimize the strength of Plato's arguments against poetry in Books II. and III. of the *Republic*, or to accuse him of narrowness in bringing forward such arguments. Certainly it would be to the last degree narrow for one to urge such arguments now against Homer or Shakespeare. But since the conditions in Plato's time were what they were, it is fair for him to try the poets by a different standard from that which we should employ, and to condemn them if they failed to offer what they were believed to offer, namely, altogether right principles and models for conduct. Jowett (*Dialogues of Plato*, 3d ed. Vol. III., p. clvii) thinks it strange that Plato "should have supposed epic verse to be inseparably associated with the impurities of the old Hellenic mythology." Epic verse for the Greeks was thus inseparably associated with an impure mythology; no epic was possible which did not rest upon a mythological foundation and was not permeated by the impure elements of mythology. On the other hand, if the phrase quoted means the epic of any time or

people, we may answer that it was not to be expected that Plato should look beyond the conditions which surrounded his own nation. His ideal state was above all a Greek state, and the question was the admission of Greek epic, as it was or as it might be. It could not have been such as to answer Plato's requirements.

D. THE ANCIENT QUARREL BETWEEN POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

In the closing chapter of the discussion in Book X. of the *Republic*, Socrates notes by way of defending himself against the charge of treating the poets harshly that there is "an ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy." He proceeds to quote various lines, whose authorship is unknown to us, in which the poets have given vent to bitter abuse of philosophers (607 B.C.). We can follow this quarrel back to Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras. The first of these three in a famous utterance accused Homer and Hesiod of having imputed to the gods all that is blame and shame for men (in Sext. Empir. *adv. Mathem.* 9. 193). Heraclitus declared that Homer, and Archilochus as well, deserved to be driven out of the schools and to be scourged (Diog. Laert. IX. 1). Pythagoras saw in the lower world, according to Hieronymus, the souls of Homer and Hesiod undergoing punishment on account of the things which they had said about the gods (Diog. Laert. VIII. 21). The causes of the quarrel may be stated as follows: first, the early Greek philosophers as students of nature (*φυσικοί*) who were seeking a *reasonable* explanation of the origin of the universe necessarily discarded or disregarded the mythological explanations of the poets, and as thinking men apprehended sooner than the masses the wickedness and the harmfulness of many epic stories; second, the poets and the philosophers were distinctly rivals for popular favor as teachers. The review of Plato's arguments in Books II. and III. of the *Republic* which has already been given makes it unnecessary to enlarge upon the first of these considerations; the second

is perhaps quite as important, and has received very little attention. The rivalry between poetry and philosophy was a perfectly natural development. The philosophers were intruding upon a field which had belonged to the poets alone. Whether as students of the universe or as religious and moral teachers, they dealt with the same subjects as the writers of theogonies and of gnomic poetry who had preceded them. "*Die beginnende Wissenschaft*," as Windelband (*Geschichte der alten Philosophie*, p. 137) has said, speaking of the early Ionic philosophers, "*behandelt dieselbe Probleme wie die mythologische Phantasie; der Unterschied zwischen beiden liegt nicht im Gegenstande, sondern in der Form der Fragestellung und der Art der Lösung.*" And again: "*Sie (the Physicists) bildeten sich eine Vorstellung über den Zusammenhang der Dinge nicht mehr nach dem mythologischen Schema, sondern durch eigne Ueberlegung und Betrachtung.*" The philosophy of Thales and his successors was an outgrowth from epic in one direction as the writings of the logographers in another. Both alike tended to supplant epic, and, if not directly antagonizing it, at least sought the ear of a public which had hitherto been interested and instructed by epic alone. So "*die philosophische Lehrgedichte*" of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles "*waren Ausläufer des didaktischen Epos*" (Christ, *Griechische Litteraturgeschichte*, p. 95) and entered into direct competition with the didactic poetry of the Hesiodic school and with gnomic verse. The fact that the philosophy of Xenophanes and his successors preserved the poetic form was due to the circumstances of its origin and at the same time shows how the early philosopher felt himself compelled to adopt that vehicle of expression which was regarded in common opinion then, as in later times, as peculiarly consecrated to moral teaching. But the Eleatics were no less the foes of the poets because they wrote in verse. The "quarrel between poetry and philosophy," which was thus begun at so early a period that Plato could call it "ancient," was on the one hand the world-old conflict between religion and science. As such it is easy to understand and to parallel in the history of other nations. The

criticisms passed upon the poets and the methods adopted in their defence by the allegorizing school of interpretation find their counterparts in very modern times. In Greece, however, the quarrel took on a character of unusual bitterness because philosophy was seeking to wrest from the poets their position as the educators of the nation. Plato, above all, legitimately heir as he was to the quarrel, sought to displace the poets as moral teachers because he believed their teaching to be worse than that which his philosophy could offer. For Plato's supreme end was that which popular opinion ascribed to the poets, namely, ethical. To quote the words of Zeller (*Die Philosophie der Griechen*, Vol. II. I, pp. 793-4), "*Was seiner Philosophie eine Wärme und eine praktische Richtung gab . . . das ist jenes sittlich-religiöse Interesse, welcher bei ihm, als ächtem Sokratiker, mit dem wissenschaftlichen so eng verknüpft ist. Die Philosophie ist ihm eben nicht bloß ein Wissen sondern ein den ganzen Menschen durchdringendes höheres Leben. . . . Die religiöse Bedeutung des Platonismus liegt in jener ethischen Stimmung, die ihm der sokratische Unterricht eingepflanzt hat.*" Plato, then, is the apostle of a new and a higher creed than the poets had given to his countrymen, and his zeal to win converts is by no means disguised. It appears in his attempts to throw discredit upon the old teachers whose influence closed men's eyes to the newer revelation, it appears also in his efforts to rival his poetic predecessors in artistic beauty of expression. The *ζηλοτυπία πρὸς Ὅμηρον* with which Dionysius of Halicarnassus charges him (*Ep. ad Cn. Pomp.*, p. 756) was really a noble emulation, the outgrowth above all of a desire to give to philosophy such an outward form of attractiveness as should enable it to vie with epic on equal terms, to win popular as well as esoteric favor, and so ultimately to accomplish the good for which it was written. The Homeric Bible of the Greeks was now an Old Testament, and Plato, the author of a new gospel, continually reminds us by his criticisms of the words of a later Teacher — "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time." Plato's criticisms are, indeed, harsher but hardly less reverent. As Jowett (Vol. III.,

p. xlix) says, "He does not, like Heraclitus, get into a rage with Homer," but rather speaks of him not only with the sincerest respect but with real affection. He feels able, however, to offer his countrymen a better system of ethics and religion than that contained in the Homeric poems. This is nowhere so clearly shown as in a rather neglected passage from the *Laws* (811 C.D.), in which Plato, after having condemned the usual system of education which consists in the study of poetry, proposes that the discussion which is now proceeding (*i.e.* the *Laws*) and any others of like nature shall be employed as text-books instead of the works of the poets. Here in his old age he states openly the belief and purpose which have almost as visibly guided him in his earlier writings. Believing, then, that philosophy should take the place of poetry as an educational force, Plato would be doing less than his duty, failing to make his plea for recognition as strong as it might and should be, if he did not expose the shortcomings of the old system while setting forth the excellences of his own. He cannot sacrifice duty to inclination or "honor a man more than the truth." If Plato had been a citizen of his own ideal state, he would have felt more keenly perhaps than any one of his fellow-citizens the loss which the state suffered in being deprived of epic and the drama. But his tremendous moral earnestness, his desire to benefit others, permit him to consider self only in so far as to express his personal sorrow for the necessity which reason forces upon him of banishing Homer. His attitude is no less noble than that of St. Paul when he says, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."

Plato is forced to his decision by *reason*, and it is just because the philosopher accepts this as his guide that he differs most widely from the poet, and is most superior to him. The poets are guided in their teachings *οὐ σοφία, ἀλλὰ φύσει τινὲ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζοντες* (*Apol.* 22 C.). There must needs be an "ancient quarrel" between them and the philosophers. They appeal to the feelings, rather than to the reason. This is to Plato a sufficient cause why they cannot be

trustworthy teachers. Their work is the product of a lower element in the soul, and tends to nourish and strengthen that element in the souls of others. So the supremacy of reason, the necessary condition of all moral excellence, is endangered. Moreover, the poets deal with the concrete, with persons and actions that cannot, in the nature of things, be wholly good; philosophy concerns itself with the abstract, with ideals of goodness, justice, and the like. The poet rouses men to noble deeds by the example of a magnificent, though imperfect, hero; the philosopher holds before them a perfect abstract pattern of nobility. Must not the latter's power for good be the stronger? Plato was too far above the level of common humanity to see more than one answer to this question.

E. MINOR REASONS FOR PLATO'S HOSTILITY TO THE POETS.

Three minor considerations may be mentioned here which, in some measure, influenced Plato against the poets. These are (1) the decline of poetry in his own day, (2) his fondness for Spartan institutions, and (3) his view of the demoralizing effect of histrionic art upon those who practised it. The first of these points is discussed at some length by Jowett (Vol. III., pp. clvii-clviii). Poetry had certainly reached a very low level during Plato's time, and Plato was too competent a critic, too much of a poet himself, to fail of realizing how far it had fallen. In the *Laws* he frequently refers in distinct terms to the degeneracy of modern poetry, dwelling especially upon the theatre ochlocracy, which "has been the ruin of our poets." It seems to me hardly fair, however, to lay so much stress upon this point as Jowett has; that is, to adduce it as an important reason why Plato banished Homer from his *Republic*. Plato was perhaps unconsciously influenced against the poets, as a class, by the conditions which existed in his maturer years, but he was too keen a thinker to be led to condemn poetic art *in toto* because it had failed to maintain its once splendid position. Indeed, it would be natural that this very fact should cause him, or any one of his age, to think the more highly of the greater poets of

former days. In fact, however, it is the oldest and noblest poets of Greece — Homer, Hesiod, and Aeschylus — whose works are criticized in the *Republic*, while not a word is said in condemnation of their modern successors. In the *Laws*, where Plato is creating a real state and would naturally pay more attention to existing conditions, where, further, he is prescribing what *shall be* the matter and form of poems *to be produced* in that state, instead of questioning whether existing works shall be admitted, he evidently has modern poetry in mind when he frames his provision for a general censorship over the poets. But there seems to be no great probability, in the light of what has been said, that the tone of criticism in the *Republic* was very much modified by such external and purely accidental considerations.

On the other hand, Plato's partiality for things Spartan, while it has been abundantly discussed, has not been considered in its bearing upon our present subject. This disposition on the part of Plato, which he inherited from Socrates, may be noted from the beginning to the end of his writings; it appears most clearly, of course, in the *Laws*. But although in this dialogue he is more openly copying the institutions of Sparta, still he is hardly less influenced by them, and virtually following them in many respects, in the *Republic*. Now poets were regarded at Sparta with almost as little favor as by Plato in the *Republic*. The argument of the *Republic*, as we have seen, is directed especially against the use of poetry as educational material; in Sparta, the study of the poets formed no part of the regular system of education. Homer was not, indeed, unknown to the Spartans, but his works were to them, hardly less than to Clinias and the Cretans, *ξενικὰ ποιήματα* (*Leg.* 680 C.); Megillus notes (*ibid.*) that the life which Homer describes was not Laconian, but rather Ionian. That is, he held not at all the same place at Sparta as in Athens. In general, the Spartans were notorious Philistines, giving very much attention to *γυμναστική*, and very little to *μουσική*. It is true that the art of music, in the narrower sense of the word, was held in high honor at Sparta, and its choral lyric poetry had made the city famous from the

earliest times ; but we do not know that other forms of verse were popular, or even tolerated, there. Just those kinds of poetry, therefore, which were permitted in the *Republic* — hymns to the gods and encomia upon good men — were practically the only kinds which were cultivated at Sparta. Even the little poetry which the Spartans had must conform to a prescribed standard, and the poets were held under strict control. The matter of their poems must be above reproach from the moral point of view, and in music and rhythm they must be true to old Dorian tradition, and introduce no novelties of any sort (*Leg.* 660 B.E.). It is certainly reasonable to suppose that Plato, comparing the Spartan attitude toward poetry and their sterner system of education with the fondness of his fellow-citizens for whatever might please the ear and their reliance upon the poets as teachers, may have found here another element of strength in the state which he so much admired ; and that the fact of his allowing the inhabitants of his ideal state only the same privileges with respect to poetry which the Spartans enjoyed, shows that he is guided to his conclusions, at least in some degree, by Spartan influence.

As to the third of the points mentioned, we should probably agree with Plato that the actor is apt to be weakened morally by the practice of his profession. We should hardly accept the philosopher's argument, founded upon the before-established principle of the division of labor, that one is unable to imitate many things well, just as he is unable to perform the actions of which the imitations are copies ; but this has little to do with the main conclusion. On the other hand, there is much truth in the statement that imitations develop into habits, and become a second nature. Certainly many parts which the actor, especially of comedy, might have been called upon to play in Plato's time, would have had a demoralizing influence upon character. We can also appreciate fully Plato's sense of the utter unworthiness of a drama which seeks to please by realistic tricks of representation, and lowers the actor to the level of an animal, or an inanimate thing. The true psychological reason why the actor is

often a person of weak character, Plato has not stated, perhaps not apprehended; but the fact is clear to him, and has its effect in determining his attitude toward the drama.

CONCLUSION.

The fundamental error into which Plato has fallen in judging the poets has already been suggested incidentally. He regards them as the enemies of reason and abstraction. Like the painters and sculptors, whom Plato holds in almost as slight esteem, they are said to deal with concrete representations or copies which are in the furthest possible degree removed from the abstract ideals. Here we see at once how imperfect was Plato's conception of art and its function. We might have expected him to regard works of art as "the intermediates between sense and ideas," a step upward toward the universal, an aid by which to rise to an understanding of the ideal. Some passages in the early part of the *Republic* seem to suggest that he did ascribe to art at least as noble a mission as this; but there is no trace of any such notion in Book X. Plato, then, failed to consider adequately the fact that human nature cannot attain to abstract ideals without the assistance of concrete representations, that sense and the emotions must be enlisted on the side of reason, that the poet's picture of an Achilles, with all his failings, does stir and elevate men more than the philosopher's appeal to pure reason, and his vision of a perfect ideal. He did not fully appreciate the necessity, and he feared the danger, of employing sensible copies which suggest the ideal, but do not portray it worthily. His thought was that such representations would hinder rather than help in the conception of this ideal, satisfying men's minds with something lower, and leading them to believe that there was nothing beyond. We may say again that this danger, which Plato apprehended, was a very real one to those who were taught to regard all of Homer as morally profitable, and Homer's heroes as altogether worthy models for imitation.